579 had been satis-
628 the loss was
a village
[411] The matter
[531] the Bebai
fied since
greater; their
chief, while
young man.
influence of
to Bebai and
fighting.
From this
628 the Pangwe
682 ple of an eye
tooth, and
only when
equal. In a
Esseng
ple had been
be concluded

Fig. 84. Wooden Shield.

fied, because on either side
exactly the same: each had
burned and a man killed.
would have gone on, because
people were still dissatis-
they regarded their loss as
casualty had been a great
the other had been only a
However, by this time the
the Whites had penetrated
thus an end was put to the

example it can be seen that
act according to the princi-
for an eye, a tooth for a
that blood revenge can cease
the losses on both sides are
"war" between Schumu and
people, eight Schumu peo-
killed, and peace could not
until eight Esseng men had

likewise been killed. Furthermore, it can be seen that village feuds fraught with consequences often arise from quite trivial causes.

727 Prisoners are usually killed and then often eaten, as has been
[266] mentioned earlier. Only children are raised as "slaves" in the
[561] village. Captured women are usually taken by the victors as wives, but sometimes they are also killed in order to even out the number of killed on both sides and thus to make peace possible. /251/

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"Etudes sur le Pays Pahouin [Study on the Pahouin Country]," op. cit.

"friendship wife"), show, as does the freedom just referred to, that the curbing of adultery can be explained by social reasons which are quite alien to sexuality.

[727
●567]
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The possibility of raping women of neighboring people during the time of conquest, the possibility of buying foreign women at a good price, so long as the slave trade lasted, permitted the "chiefs" of groupings to remedy the dangers due to the unsatisfied desires of the young men. Apparently the Fang do not display, as do some people, (2) signs of unsatisfied sex due to the fact that

2. Cf. R. Bastide, Sociologie et Psychanalyse [Sociology and Psychoanalysis], pp. 160-161.

women remain the property of the older men. What is sought is the legal possession of the woman, let us say, for the many advantages it entails, rather than sexual possession. And in this sense the justification brought forward by L. Mba can be understood when he writes, "It was not material satisfaction of the senses which drove the Pahouins to polygamy, but many other reasons. . . ."

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When the marriage is consummated, the woman goes from a state of near liberty to one of strict sexual control. The specific painful physical penalties for adultery to which the woman alone is subject are particularly severe: being exposed naked before the assembled village, being tied to the ant tree, excision of the clitoris or pimento torture, various mutilations. When the woman, either by flight or by rape, leaves the grouping into which she married, the whole group reacts violently. It is the cause of fights, kidnaping, and pillaging of the village that has taken her in. (3) There is the most absolute contrast between this control

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3. "Hence, conflicts that last for years, expressed through kidnaping of women and ending in gunshots," Libreville, Archives of 1909. And

554 regions where the Fang population seems relatively old, instability
622 is the rule for a large proportion of the groupings. There is thus a sort of vicious circle: mobility imposed by long-range conquest has prevented the [138] establishment of a hierarchical organization and this "lack" results in an unrestrained instability.

The social system does not show any elements favorable to a better hierarchical organization. While the pre-eminence of the eldest is accepted, that of the eldest lineage (from which, among the Ba-kongo, the "crowned chief" is selected) is barely maintained. On the contrary, we have shown that there is a nearly constant tension between this lineage and those of the "younger"
● [567] brothers. On the other hand, the absence of domestic slavery indicates the wish to prevent any development of inequality. During
[727] the entire period of great conquests the Fang have had only two solutions in relation to conquered foreigners: to destroy or to adopt. And while the eldest appears to be the regulator of the economic and political life, and to be responsible for the worship of the ancestors, his authority is subject to an effective control. It counts only within the framework of groupings of limited extent. It is open to the criticism of the men of the nd'è bòt (who consider themselves the equal of the eldest who only acts "by delegation") or of the council members when the village contains several minor lineages. It also remains in competition with occasional authorities.

If it is true that seniority almost automatically creates authority, this authority is also limited and often threatened by the principle that "the most capable" is the most influential. In the fairly large villages, the position of chief (one should rather say the regulator and intermediary with foreign groupings, which the word ntòl specifically means) is generally passed on from eldest son to eldest son (or, in default, from eldest [son] to a younger brother on the same segment) in the lineage descended from the founder. This is on condition that the successor is approved by all "for his bravery, his wealth, and his eloquence." (1) In the opposite case, a stronger

1. L. Mba, Coutumier Pahouin [Pahouin Customs], p. 12.

personality is chosen from among the eldest of another nd'è bòt in the village. In other respects this authority is controlled by a council

561 an old man, nnôm môt, who lived too long lost his prestige as he be-
88 came decrepit. It seems probable that during the great migrations old people, particularly feeble old women, were abandoned in the forest when a village moved its site. Certainly death must often have come before the infirmities of age, from fighting, hunting, or the first serious illness. My informants were always unanimous in telling me
[769] that the skull of an infirm or senile old man could not be used in the biéri cult.

With the second generation of descendants, a man, alive or dead, inevitably becomes émvam, a forefather, in the double sense of grandfather and ancestor.

561 An age grade covers about three years: this is about the longest possible stretch of time during which two children born on different dates can both be at the breast together, and it was approximately the interval separating two large collective initiation ceremonies. Classificatory kinship groups people by generation: all those of one generation are bobenyañ, brothers, as mentioned above. Within an age grade the term éjula, "comrade," is more apt to be used. The succession of age grades created an internal hierarchy within the generation and strengthened the clan and tribal ties between the bijula. This strengthening was even more marked between the bo'bewôsô of the same time of initiation.

178 Modern life alters these ties, as much from the dying out or trans-
561 formation of the initiations as from the loosening of ties in the extended family and also from the greater mobility of individuals and limited families. The little Fang boy born at Fort-Lamy, where his father is postal agent, scarcely feels himself to be the éjula of his clan monyañ born on the same day at Libreville. Economic and political development tends more and more to set up hierarchies founded more on occupation, wealth, even education, rather than on age and rank in the family. /58/

4. Slavery, Castes, Classes, Chiefdoms

567 Largeau spoke of the Pahouin as of a "people who have no synonym for our words 'king,' 'master,' 'servant,' 'workman,' 'slave.'" It is a fine phrase, but it only partially corresponds to reality. Largeau himself, in his encyclopedia, translates the word "slave" as nsagha, a loan word from Gabonese (Mpongwé), he says. Further north, people

567 spoke of ɔ̂lo (or mon ɔ̂lo) or étu'a as against nti (nté) or mo'nti, the latter word meaning freeman, civis. However, all the late nineteenth century writers agree that the Pahouin did not know of slavery and, closer to our period, L. Mba repeats the assertion, declaring that belô [727] or minsagha were not slaves but prisoners of war "considered part of the spoils" (no. 120).

Nevertheless, it does indeed seem that there were genuine com- 567 mercial transactions, selling and buying of these captives or, at any 727 rate, of the bitu'a, whose position must have been different from that of the bo' belo. The latter were more likely prisoners subject to ransom (ngɔ̂tɔ̂ = ransom) or hostages; I have personally known elderly Boulou men of good family who were prisoners of the Bané in the way after the 1885 ɔ̂ban /war/. They had been treated as men not as chattel, taking part in noble masculine activities such as hunting, but not in work considered menial like porterage. Some of them married Bané girls at the time of the treaty which followed the ɔ̂ban; others were adopted by Bané clans. In their case one certainly could not speak of slavery.

567 The position was not the same for the bitu'a (1), who were, as I

[304]

1. Sometimes called bityi'ityi'a, the mutilated, the gashed, because their ears were slashed.

made the objects of commercial transactions, of sales, and not simply put in pawn. First lieutenant Dominick, for instance, bought outright from Ewɔ̂ndo chiefs part of his complement of porters. These bitu'a were not Pahouin but foreign prisoners from neighboring tribes or the original inhabitants of conquered territory. Therefore it is perhaps correct to say that the Pahouin had no slaves among themselves of their own, but not that they were unacquainted with slavery. They certainly made little use of it, preferring to exchange captives for merchandise from the coastal or river tribes who specialized in trade. Besides, the children of belô or of bitu'a born within a clan must have been pretty easily absorbed if one of the parents belonged to the clan.

563 At the present time, in any case, the distinction between bo' beti 565 and bo' belo is very fine drawn (2), not to say obliterated, if only

515 791 825 of danger. Hence the symbolic choice of fast birds: the river swallow, the koulyèbe that flies like an arrow, the eagle or the vulture whose powerful flight protects it from enemies, the turtledove or the wood pigeon that knows how to conceal a nest so as to escape all attention. Or it might be an antelope with nimble legs and acute hearing, [482] which is especially difficult to capture. Finally, the crocodile sometimes appears as a totem not because it is bad tempered and devours men, but because it is always on the watch and at the slightest disturbance submerges itself and disappears in the river or because its scaly covering makes it invulnerable to arrows and javelins.

Such are the qualities that a secret society demands for itself.

515 791 782 The "consecrator" has chosen the totem, generally that of a class. He must now procure one himself but catch it "alive." He brings it into the hut of the "consecrated" one, who keeps it, at least as much as possible, on his chest throughout a whole night. In the morning the totem is led with great ceremony to the middle of a clearing and sprinkled with lustral water: the attending practitioners dance around it, then sing the hymn to the totem; the candidate sings it along with them. This hymn extols the totem's strength, valor, and swiftness, and especially thanks it for the protection given the society. Then, after this hymn, the candidate fetches the victim, whom he must offer, and leads him before the totem. Ordinarily, the victim is a foreign slave, because he should not belong to the Fan nation, in order to avoid any possible ritual offense. (1) It is, however, permissible --

● [567 562]

> 1. A foreign slave or a woman is chosen because neither possesses a totem and therefore no ritual offense is to be feared.

and this often happens -- to take a Fan woman. The slave or woman is tightly gagged. Usually no resistance is offered, especially since the victim is given alɛ̀wanɛ́ to drink the evening before, a decoction of herbs and woody mushrooms that have the property of suppressing memory. The neophyte forces the victim to walk in front of him, or pushes him, going around the totem

[278]

224 ditch, its point in the air, so that any animal falling in will almost certainly be pierced. Having finished with these preliminaries, the hunters make ready to actually beat for game. First there will have been a large sacrifice. Suppose a tribe has the scaly anteater (ye-mvil) for its totem. The tribal chief is the first to start on the hunt after a preparatory fast of three days. During that time he has remained apart in a small reed hut in the midst of the forest, eating only the food he brought with him, which he must first have placed on the évora biéri. He drinks only from an aromatic leaf folded into a cone; furthermore, he abstains from any relations with his wives, because contact with women is supposed at such times to be an offense against the totem (nsem éki). After these three days he makes a fetish, that is, a sacrifice to the tribal or clan totem, according to the usual practice; it consists of a goat at least or better a sheep. Formerly always and nowadays even occasionally, it was always a slave. After the sacrifice [555] the chief takes part of the victim -- the rest belongs to the practitioner -- and throughout the hunt, he must eat no other meat. He then leaves and returns to the village only when he has met with, captured alive if possible, or if not, slain, the totem animal. If he kills it he must take care that none of the animal's blood drips onto the path, thus risking being profaned, for that would be another ritual offense. Therefore the chief carefully closes the wound with dry leaves and the fluff from a banana tree.

[834] [782] [567]

While returning to the village the chief must be seen by no woman; he therefore takes care to announce his arrival by a special call, which is answered by a tom-tom, and then dashes into his hut. The women who happen to be in the village, outside their huts, must go inside quickly.

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The totem animal is then placed on the évora biéri. If it is too large to fit, the chief opens it and puts on the évora the brains, lungs, and heart, the three parts which contain the life principle and the various souls. The carcass is offered in sacrifice in the accustomed manner and then divided among all the hunters.

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